

What is a Family Ombudsman?

The Family Ombudsman for the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice serves as a direct link between families and OJJ. The Family Ombudsman facilitates parents having a voice within the system and advocates for strong family involvement across all settings and services, while promoting the vision and mission of the agency. The Ombudsman acts as an information source and attempts to forestall problems by facilitating early recognition of complaints/concerns and provides an avenue for prompt response for family members/guardians.

What does the Family Ombudsman do?

- Educates families on how to effectively navigate through the juvenile justice system
- Identifies ways to improve and expand family involvement in youth's treatment/programming at each secure care facility and residential non-secure care provider in the community
- Offers information and referrals to bring parents together with community resources and helps them to access these resources
- Promotes family preservation services in the community to better meet the needs of youth under our supervision
- Reviews findings, concerns, grievances, and complaints submitted by youth and others and acts as a mediator between individuals and the organization and reports final concerns to the Deputy Secretary or designee of OJJ
- Visit, listen to, coach/mentor youth at the facilities
- Promote and expand the orientation program for parents/guardians of youth under the care, supervision, or custody of OJJ
- Make periodic unannounced visits to secure and non-secure care facilities. During visits, talk to youth and staff about programming and family involvement
- Report any allegations of unusual occurrences to Investigative Services (which may include allegations of abuse, excessive use of force, neglect, conditions of confinement, etc.)

What should I do before I call the Family Ombudsman?

First, try to resolve your problem by contacting the secure care facility or residential non-secure care provider where your son or daughter has been placed while under the care, supervision, or custody of OJJ. Many times, an agency official can explain a specific policy or correct the problem.

When you contact an agency, remember to:

- Have all the relevant information. It helps to write down the problem and your questions ahead of time.
- Talk to the right people. State the action you are requesting. If you cannot resolve the problem with the case worker, speak to the case worker's supervisor and the facility director (in that order). Ask questions to help you understand what happened and why.
- Keep notes and records of all your contacts, including dates, times, telephone numbers, and the names and titles of people you speak with.
- Carefully read all information that is sent to you; there may be important information requesting family participation in your sons/daughters treatment/programming.
- Be pleasant and polite. Being rude or angry won't resolve your problem.

If you've followed these suggestions and still can't resolve your problem, contact the Family Ombudsman.

How can I contact the Family Ombudsman?

Youth and family/guardians can share concerns and suggestions for improving services by contacting Family Ombudsman, Kim Mims

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